

Greater Manchester Mayoral Elections Manifesto 2024

Unlocking a skills revolution in
Greater Manchester



Overview

Greater Manchester continues to take charge of its own destiny with deeper devolution, presenting opportunities we have never had before. Our city region has so much potential, but this potential will go unrealised without ensuring every young person and adult can access the skills they need to get high quality jobs in Greater Manchester's labour market. Colleges in Greater Manchester are raring to work alongside GMCA and employers to deliver the ambitions for an integrated technical education city region, building stronger links between employers and further education and training.

This document offers an overview of some suggested policy ideas for inclusion in the 2024 Mayoral manifesto, to help unlock a skills revolution in Greater Manchester.

Proposals

1) Incentivise adult learning:

Too many adults in Greater Manchester can't get the skills local employers need, because of barriers to accessing further education. Many adults live complex lives- they may have had poor experience in compulsory education and now need to manage caring responsibilities, mental health challenges and feel trapped in low paid, low skilled work. Adult education transforms lives- whether it's equipping the unemployed with basic skills and employability support, or providing reskilling and upskilling opportunities to those already in work.

The Mayor could break down barriers for adults accessing training even further by:

- Implementing an Adult Education Maintenance Allowance, funded through the AEB for adults to access training, linked to priorities in the local skills improvement plan (LSIP).
- Implement further incentives for upskilling people in work, for example, waiving college course fees for employers looking to upskill employees in priority sectors (linked to the LSIP), regardless of prior attainment.

2) Build better employer partnership:

Skills reforms have aimed to put employers in the driving seat. Greater Manchester has a strong record of building genuine partnership between GMCA, employers, representative bodies and education and training providers.

The Mayor could take this even further by:

- Extending the GM Good Employment Charter to include further commitments from employers- including: offering work experience and T Level placements to young people in Greater Manchester; working with colleges to co-design the post-16 curriculum, in line with local labour market needs; boost level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships, and commit where possible to paying apprentices at least the real living wage.
- Research highlights the strong, positive role that learning has on other aspects of life, for example, mental health. The Mayor could use devolved funding to bring together a range of agencies to target improvements in health and wellbeing.
- Move to an employer informed system- recognising that ambitions will only be unlocked through genuine, equal partnership. The success of the integrated technical education city region ambitions needs engagement with FE providers at all levels. GMCA should support providers and employers to build on work of the LSIP and local skills improvement fund (LSIF) to work closely together, recognising expertise of both sets of partners through involvement in the Joint Oversight Board and other governance structures.

3) Unlocking capital to support growth:

To meet significant and growing learner demand from young people and adults, it is vital that colleges have access to the capital they need to improve and further develop facilities.

The Mayor can support this by:

- Securing further devolved powers over post-16 capital funding, with fairer, quicker and more transparent access to funding for colleges.
- There is a need for significant investment in capital equipment, to ensure technical education remains up-to-date with industry standards. Provision should be made for this, alongside capital investment in buildings.
- Seeking powers for local authorities to provide loans to colleges for capital projects- to help colleges better access borrowing facilities, following public sector reclassification.

4) Supporting colleges to do what they do best:

Colleges are raring to support GMCA's ambitions to make Greater Manchester a technical education city region, where all residents can realise their potential. To do this, colleges need the right policy and funding conditions to do what they do best- deliver high quality education and training for learners, employers and the wider community.

The Mayor can do this by:

- Ensuring as much skills funding as possible reaches the front line- getting the balance right between strong accountability and reducing unnecessary bureaucracy for colleges.
- Implementing a multi-year funding settlement for colleges- providing much-needed financial certainty, so they can forward plan and deliver on programmes with a longer lead time.
- Supporting colleges to ~~unlock barriers to~~ growth and innovation- joining our calls for support around tackling colleges staff recruitment and retention challenges, managing curriculum reform and ensuring learner and employer demand can be met sufficiently with available funding.
- Working with schools on increasing English and ~~maths attainment at key stage 4 and more~~ funding and capacity for colleges to meet higher learner demand.
- Fully devolve funding to support innovation- FE involvement in innovation projects can be facilitated by maintaining a GM FE innovation fund for colleges to access, to deliver projects which help local businesses to grow and increase productivity.
- Help tackle FE workforce challenges by working local with colleges and universities to promote teaching in FE as a strong career option, by developing post-16 PGCE pathways.

- Ringfencing and maximising the skills budget within a potential future single funding settlement.

About GM Colleges

GM Colleges is a long standing and mature partnership with a strong track record of effective collaboration and ambition for the future. Our high performing colleges meet the needs of the employers and the GM workforce, current and future, in key growth and employment sectors with training at all levels and ages from entry to post graduate.

GM Colleges collectively delivers learning to 70,000 students (30,000 16–18-year-olds and 40,000 adults), including many of those most vulnerable in society.

Further links

[GM Colleges website](#)

The [Association of Colleges](#) has published [Opportunity England](#)- its vision for tertiary education in the next cycle of government, outlining how colleges can transform life chances, overcome inequalities, and boost economic growth. Policy recommendations within this may be useful for consideration.

Contacts

Anna Dawe, Chair of GM Colleges-
a.dawe@wigan-leigh.ac.uk

Richard Caulfield, Senior Policy Manager,
GM Colleges- r.caulfield@wigan-leigh.ac.uk

